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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OTTAWA 000234

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/A - T. REOTT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADA ON AFGHAN RECONCILIATION: PERHAPS A MEETING
IN MAY?

REF: OTTAWA 182

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request for SCA/A -- see para 4.

12. (C) As promised in reftel, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Afghanistan Task Force (FTAG) Desk Officer Samantha Pass gave pol/miloff a copy of the reconciliation non-paper that FTAG Assistant Deputy Minister Yves Brodeur had already shared with NATO-ISAF Regional Command - South (RC-S) officials in London on March 20. Pass commented that the Canadian paper had "provoked good discussion" in London, which has led ADM Brodeur to believe that the U.S. and the U.K. -- and, to a lesser extent, The Netherlands -- share Canada's view that allies ought to produce a "framework reflecting agreed redlines by which forces in the field could deal with those who approach RC-S partners to be reconciled."

13. (C) Canada, according to Pass (a British exchange officer), is considering organizing a meeting of the U.S., U.K, Netherlands, NATO, and UN officials in New York in May to draft a shared approach to reconciliation to guide discussion of the topic with the Afghan government, although probably not until after the election in August. Pass requested confirmation that the U.S. would be willing to participate in such a meeting.

14. (U) Action request: please advise ASAP whether USG would support such a meeting and accept an invitation to participate.

15. (SBU) BEGIN NONPAPER

SENSITIVE: for RC(S) Officials Meeting, 20 March 2009

Non-paper

Reconciliation: contact & facilitation

It is the Government of Afghanistan's (GoA) responsibility to lead political reconciliation efforts. While early initiatives have had limited success, a renewed emphasis on reconciliation has emerged in recent months, with the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) assuming the lead for developing efforts at the local-level across Afghanistan. At the same time, a number of other projects are potentially providing space for reconciliation. Key among

these are the roll-out of the Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme, which is developing sub-national governance structures through the development of local district councils, and the extension of the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) mandate, with DIAG operations now planned for the south and east of Afghanistan. In some provinces, individual Governors are also developing their own reconciliation strategies.

Progress on reconciliation is dictated by a number of factors, including (but not limited to): the influence of forthcoming elections; the continuing difficult security situation; complex regional dynamics; and the simple fact that many Afghan institutions still lack the capacity to deliver on the ground. Realistically the time is not ripe for a comprehensive reconciliation process that engages the various facets of the insurgency at the highest levels. But nascent reconciliation and related efforts at a lower-level, and on a local basis, by IDLG and others may fair better in the current climate, and could conceivably produce interest among insurgents in reconciling. Among insurgents in reconciling.

That in turn will have implications for ISAF military and civilian officials on the ground, who may be approached by individuals or groups wishing to reconcile. We recognise we are not there yet. But it's not outside the bounds of possibility that due to the constantly evolving situation on the ground and increased discussion of the possibilities for reconciliation, our military and civilian personnel in RC(S) may be approached at any time.

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We recognise that only the GoA can develop a common system for reconciling insurgents. It must include clear direction to allies on what the GoA wants our role to be. Neither a system nor guidance has been forthcoming for a variety of reasons.

But when thinking does evolve, and as we engage the GoA on this, allies may wish to give thought to the common principles we may wish to encourage among ourselves ahead of our military or civilian personnel being approached by those insurgents wishing to reconcile.

The purpose of this non-paper is to stimulate discussion at the upcoming RC(S) officials meeting around the issue of contact and facilitation. It aims to:

Consider those factors that will need to be taken into account when formulating contact & facilitation policies for our military and civilian representatives in Afghanistan;

Encourage the development of consistent messaging from ISAF allies to insurgents who express an interest in reconciling;

Further develop thinking on how to liaise and work alongside the Government of Afghanistan, the UN and other key stakeholders on this specific issue.

We see three key dimensions to consider in a discussion of contact/facilitation policy development - political, operational and legal:

(1) Political

Recognising the political sensitivities of engaging with insurgents in the context of reconciliation, and that only the Government of Afghanistan can provide direction and guidance on how to proceed:

How do we best ensure an understood and co-ordinated approach with the Government of Afghanistan?

What level of support/involvement could the Government of

Afghanistan want or request from ISAF allies as it reconciles insurgents?

A role for the UN?

Next Step: Commitment among ISAF allies in RC(S) to share approaches to contact and facilitation as they are developed.

(2) Operational

Avoiding inconsistent messaging and actions that confuse the political landscape and may increase the risks to our military personnel and officials in RC(S):

How can we best encourage the GoA to develop a common system for processing reconciling insurgents, including guidance to allies on their role?

How should ISAF nations react if asked to support Afghanistan efforts to persuade insurgents to reconcile (information operations, protection, facilitation, escort etc)?

Next Step: Remain engaged with the GoA, encouraging development of an agreed system for reconciling insurgents. Among allies, work towards developing shared core principles on how to engage on the ground with fighters requesting to reconcile.

(3) Legal

Ensuring we operate within clear guidelines that help, rather than hinder, our actions.

What do our legal obligations allow and prevent ISAF military and civilian personnel from doing when considering a request to reconcile from an insurgent? How do we best apply those obligations?

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How do we ensure that current listing regimes, including UNSCR 1267, work to support a reconciliation process, rather than block it?

Next Step: A common understanding of the mechanics of UNSCR 1267 and similar listing regimes, perhaps through identifying points of contact at our missions in New York to keep in touch and discuss issues as they arise, as necessary.

Follow-up: review progress at next RC(S) officials meeting (likely Autumn/Fall 2009)

END NON-PAPER

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